THE PAPA FORTE 1921 STORY

By Dennis Voss, Horse Butte Ranch

In 1992 I was studying the Performance Breeders' bulls rather intently at the 4C's feedlot near Joliet, Montana. I became very interested in the Envious Blackbird cow family, especially Envious Blackbird of RR 7066 (9017790). This cow family still intrigues me to this very day because of the short gestation, the muscle and the low back fat. I arrived at the sale early. The Performance Breeder's bull sale was one of the great bull sales in America. At that time four enthusiastic members formed the original group known as the Performance Breeders; John Hamilton, Dale Davis, Dave Hinman, Bill Davis and all of their hard working families behind them.

As I went through the offering, I couldn't find PAPA 8832 Optimum 1921 (cane code 90AN0368). So I found Dale and he informed me that this bull didn't quite fit the rest of the Optima's. The Optima's that year were a featured set of bulls in volume. Dale said PAPA 8832 Optimum 1921 was just a little shorter framed bull. I said I knew that and came to buy him. He said, "After the sale I'll drive you up to look at him. If at that point you want him, I'll sell him full interest, full possession for the average of the sale today". The sale was another one of those Performance Breeders barn burners with superior support from many top commercial cattle producers from all over the country and especially the northern Plains. I purchased the top selling bull, PAPA Crusader 1925 for $16,000 and the third high selling bull CH Revival 104 for $11,000.

After the sale a group of us went with Dale to see PAPA 8832 Optimum 1921. The outfit was full of guys curious about this bull I was going to buy. We drove into the pasture and he was up on top of a hill and man was he stylish. Shorter framed, but very stylish, very fluid on his feet and very proud. One of the proudest bulls I have ever been around, proud of himself, proud of his sire, proud of his mother and proud of the Angus breed. I said, "Dale it's a deal". Dale said, "Sold for $2,816 the average of the sale". Some of the other guys in the truck asked, "Any chance we can be a part of this"? And I said no way...

...We drove back to the big party in Belgrade where the dialogue flowed with vigor. I started getting teased about the bull I bought after the sale. Guys called him a little pud. He wasn't. They wanted to know what I was going to use him on and I said heifers. One renowned bull breeder said, "Heifers? That big headed, big shouldered, little bastard - heifers?" The guy's one of my best friends and I won't embarrass him by naming him in this story.

As soon as I got him up to the ranch, I invited my friend Lewis Hagen, who was with Accelerated Genetics at the time, to take a look at him. Lewis came up, took one look at him, and saw his whole future. He said, "We've got to change his name Dennis. This bull is going to go somewhere. How about the name Forte?" I said, "Lewis, you're a genius. This bull is so proud that the name Forte couldn't fit him better." Lewis went right to work. He started getting people interested in him clear down in South America and Australia. Accelerated Genetics leased him and the next thing I know, Dale Davis is calling me on the phone. Dale says, "What the hell are you and Lewis doing up there with this Forte bull"? I said, "Dale, this bull is going to be famous". Dale says, "I know, I know, but I didn't save an interest". I said, "That's simple Dale. Send me $2 and I'll transfer a third interest, no problem." I still have the $2 bill framed in my ranch office along with a wonderful, kind note from Dale.

PAPA Forte 1921 (cane code 14AN123) collected well and we used him on heifers the first spring. Erica and I drove him down to the heifers in a trailer. A bunch of them were grouped up there, some of them in heat, Forte gets out of the trailer, looks around, puts on quite a show, feels so good to be out that he goes bucking over the hill with the heifers in pursuit. His calves were born the next spring as easy as any heifer bulls' calves we've had since, most of the time at least two weeks early, sometimes three weeks early. Extremely vigorous, little heifer companions. Erica and I always got a kick out of the Forte calves. As time went on and we got more of them, we could identify them by the way their small ears set on their heads. His daughters were the same way. Whatever they were bred to, you had better be ready two weeks in advance. We never had a mean Forte cow or bull. Proud? Yes. Shake the chute a little? Yes. Make you wonder? Maybe, sometimes. And never to this very day will I ever go along with the idea that the bull produced nasty disposition, which became part of the mantra some purebred clowns like to stick on him. One rumor about a bull and misinterpretation turns into a big deal with the wink, wink, nod, nod, purebred hypocrisy crowd. Forte himself was a bull we could scratch and while he put on quite a show, he never charged anyone that I knew of. This bull was proud, and there is a difference.

Some of the finest cattle breeders in the country know the value of this bull and the great tribute he was to Dale's program. In those years PAPA Forte generated thousands of dollars. Probably one of the most incredible bovine investments Horse Butte Ranch ever made. He was hot property in South America and Australia and worked really well in their grass oriented programs.

In later years, master bull man Scott Spickard used Forte in the international barn at Hawkeye/ Genex to rev up bulls that needed a little libido fire. He said PAPA Forte would absolutely drive the other bulls in that barn crazy with his antics, his bellering and his big time show. He said it made the other bulls collect better.

As Forte grew old in the international barn, there came a day when Scott said we had probably better let him retire soon. In 1998 our good friend Dave Duncan of High Valley Angus Ranch purchased a third interest in Forte and just like magic with all of his new connections and respect, the sales took off again...

Woodhill Foresight, Papa Forte 1921 son

...In 2003, when he was twelve, we brought him home to the ranch and turned him loose on the creek bottom in the first pasture where he had bred heifers. He lived down there by himself for about another eight months. We figured he probably had a heart attack and we figured he'd lived about thirteen years. His impact on our herd and many others was profound. One, he shortened gestation. Two, he developed strong marbling and ribeye data with low backfat, a very rare combination of EPD's. Three, he added muscling. His daughters may be the best of the whole deal. They are very efficient rangers of grass with excellent udders. The proud factor in the bull set the stage for what I feel is an essential ingredient in range cattle breeding. Range cattle are very different from small lotted, hobby cattle farms, backyard purebred breeders and any feedlot mentality type operations. Forte was about raising cattle in big open spaces where survival is essential to profit. In that respect Forte was one of the great bulls of Horse Butte Ranch and still has numerous daughters in production and will be used in the future as well.

VE Meyer Forte 330F, Papa Forte 1921 son

A very special thank you to Dennis Voss for granting us permission to republish this story.

Papa Forte 1921 Reg: AAA #11620690 Bull

[D2F-M1F]
Birth Date: 02/13/1991 **Tattoo:** 1921
Parentage: Blood type, Microsatellite, SNP **Genomic:** HD50K **Genomic Prog:** 44
Breeder: 128803 - Dale H Davis, Belgrade, MT
First Owner: 128803 - Dale H Davis, Belgrade, MT
Owner(s): 128803 - Dale H Davis, Belgrade, MT
149363 - Dave Duncan, Ellensburg, WA
265699 - Horse Butte Ranch, Two Dot, MT

P S Power Play (AAA #8974207 {RTF}
Scotch Cap (AAA #10226429)
Hoff Band 07 of S C 509 (AAA #9538351)
SIRE: Papa Optima 9818 (AAA 11294119)
Q A S Traveler 23-4 (AAA #9250717)
Blackbird D H D 2816 (AAA 10191394)
R R Blackbird D H D 903 (AAA 9412565)

Cottontail Maternal POWER464 (AAA #10631334)
Papa Rito T Power D H D 6838 (AAA 10846673)
Envious Blackbird D H D 3811 (AAA #10381715)
DAM: Papa Envious Blackbird 8832 (AAA 11136434)
PBC 707 1M F0203 (AAA #8252710)
Envious Blackbird of RR 7066 (AAA 9017790)
Envious Blackbird of RR 3026 (AAA 7853778)